

South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired South Dakota School for the Deaf

Responses provided by Marjorie Kaiser, Superintendent
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1. How is the university responding and/or adapting to changing high demand credentials/jobs?
 2. What is the biggest challenge(s) the university is facing in the next 1, 3, 5 years?
 - a. What can be done to address the identified challenge(s)?
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The motto of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is "Preparing students to step forward with confidence and a vision of lifetime success." South Dakota School for the Deaf describes itself as "Partners in Educational Success". We strive not only to ensure students with sensory impairments have full access to education designed to meet their unique learning needs, but to prepare students to leave K-12 education with the skills necessary to be successful in their communities.

Collaboration with our specialists help local school districts meet their requirement to have someone on the child's school team who understands the nature and impact of the disability. When educational decisions are made without this expertise, students often miss out on valuable learning experiences.

Nationally, South Dakota ranks high when compared with other states in the number of people with disabilities who are in the work force. An achievement of 50% is good news. The bad news is 50% of people with disabilities remain unemployed. The numbers for individuals who are deaf or blind are even worse. As educators of children with sensory loss we have a deep commitment to student success.

Biggest Challenges/Solutions

Maintaining credentials for our teachers of the blind and visually impaired or deaf and hard of hearing are very important to our service to students in South Dakota. With an estimated 5,000 annual openings across the country and the difficulty of recruiting to South Dakota, we need to continue to grow our own through university collaborations.

Over the next five years we will be seeing significant retirements at SDSBVI. We need to train a new generation of teachers in a specialized area that requires training above the typical special education endorsement. Northern State University has the only program that offers an endorsement for teachers of the visually impaired. This endorsement is added to a teaching certificate.

The faculty at SDSD are not as close to retirement, but they are in high demand. Augustana University had the state's only program to train teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing. That program has been phased out leaving no instate program to train teachers. In deaf education, the skills and training also extend beyond that of a general special education teacher.

The biggest challenge for the two special schools is to train the next generation of teachers to maintain our considerable expertise in this state.

1. Create an opportunity for teachers to attain master's degrees in deaf education with an out of state university. We are currently working with the Board of Regents staff on the design and budget for this program.
2. Continue to work with NSU on teacher of the blind and VI to maintain and enhance the quality of the program and provide new opportunities for NSU education majors.